MAY, 1878.

The monthly evening meeting of the Society was held on Tuesday May 14. His Excellency the Governor occupied the chair, and, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, there was a fair attendance of the Fellows.

The Hon. Secretary, Dr. AGNEW, brought forward the usual monthly returns, viz.:—

1. Number of visitors to Museum during April—total, 3172.
2. Ditto to Garden during April—total, 4395.
3. Plants and seeds received at Botanic Gardens:—From the Royal Gardens, Kew, 100 varieties willow, most of which are alive. From Mr. James Dall, Nelson, New Zealand, 7 species of New Zealand, tree ferns. From Mons. Jules Cock, Ghent, Belgium, 43 species seeds, principally coniferæ. From J. Lidbetter, Esq., Bombay, eight species Indian coniferæ. From Mr. Wm. Bull, London, 55 varieties, lily and iris bulbs. From Mr. C. F. Creswell, Melbourne, one box imported herbaceous plants, about one half of which are alive. From Captain W. Willett, 63 packets, imported seeds. From the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, nine packets seeds of coniferæ.
4. Time of leafing, etc., of a few standard plants in the Botanic Gardens during the month.
5. Books and periodicals received.
6. Presentions to Museum.
7. Meteorological Tables.

a. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq.—Table for April.
b. Mount Nelson, from the Marine Board.—Table for April.
c. Melbourne, from R. J. L. Ellery, Esq.—Printed tables for November, 1877.

The presentations to the Museum were as follows:

1. From Mr. Thos. Dale, New Norfolk.—A water-worn rock specimen from the drift gravel, near New Norfolk.
2. From Mr. W. F. Davidson, Bagdad.—A Half-penny of George I., 1722.
8. From Mr. G. H. Latham.—Three stone Axes, from New Zealand.

A specimen of marble, cut and polished, was placed on the table for inspection. In calling attention to this specimen, Mr. Stephens remarked that though the term "marble" was sometimes restricted to altered or metamorphic rocks, it also included all limestones used for ornamental purposes, the black and grey limestones from the carboniferous rocks of England and Ireland being extensively utilised. The specimen before the meeting was from the so-called "Devonian" limestones of Maria Island, and would bear comparison with many marbles of the same class which have attained high favour. It had been furnished by Mr. Robert Robinson, of Spring Bay, whose name was familiar to many Fellows of the Society, and it was to be hoped that he would be successful in this attempt to establish a new and permanent industry in Tasmania.

The SECRETARY read a paper entitled "A few remarks on the distribution and growth of Queensland plants," contributed by F. M. Bailey, Esq., of Brisbane, a Corresponding Member of the Society.

His Lordship the BISHOP of Tasmania read an important paper on "Water supply in relation to disease."

Discussion ensued, in which His Excellency, the Bishop, Messrs. Stephens, Grant, Shoobridge, Swan, and others, took part.

Dr. HALL said he regretted that his infirmity of hearing had pre-

vented him from following His Lordship's remarks, for he was sure that the subject in such hands would be treated so as to produce a beneficial effect. In his (Dr. Hall's) capacity as Health Officer, such support was most valuable, for when respected and intelligent gentlemen took up sanitary subjects, it would have much more weight with Government, and local authorities than anonymous letters in the newspapers. In the paper to which the Bishop had alluded, read to the society by him (Dr. Hall) fifteen years ago this month, he had predicted that those diseases most influenced by impure water, would diminish by the recently improved supply. He had stated that on an average of the six years, 1857-62, the mortality from dysentery, diarrhœa, etc., had been 8 per cent. of the total deaths. Last year, with its very heavy death list, the proportion was rather less than half. Could other sanitary improvements be made to effect a similar reduction in other diseases he would go to his grave satisfied that his labours in the cause had not been fruitless.

Referring to some remarks as to certain diseases being propagated by germs carried about by the air, water, and other means the Secretary observed that although the "germ" theory of disease was a good working theory, it was well to recollect that its correctness had never yet been actually proved. He, himself had long thought, from many instances which had come under his observation, that disease of an infectious character could occur *de novo*—that is without the action of any pre-existing germ. Within the last few months Dr. R. W. Richardson, who was certainly second to none in the profession for learning, ability, and power of original research, had contributed to a scientific periodical a paper in which he attacked with much cogent reasoning the "germ" theory, and offered a carefully considered suggestion to the effect that infectious diseases were due to a poison secreted by the individual—the poison of the snake being adduced as an extreme example. The poison when formed might be conveyed from one individual to another by the air, by various fluids, or by personal contact; and acted, not after the manner of a ferment but, by producing certain (catalytic) changes in the secretion of the part to which it was applied. Particular portions of the body were affected by, and reproduced particular poisons, the skin for instance as to scarlet fever, the throat as to diphtheria, the mucous membrane of the bowels as to typhoid fever, etc. Poisonous secretions, however, in some cases might be the result of certain nervous influences inducing diseased local secretions, and thus disease of an infectious character might commence *de novo*. This theory, the Secretary thought, would in many instances afford an explanation of the occurrence of sporadic disease, the origin of which, in his opinion, was frequently inexplicable by the "germ" or *omne ex ovo* hypothesis. (See *Nature*, October 4, 1877.)

His Excellency mentioned he had recently when fishing caught two parr, one in the Derwent, the other in the Nile. From the finger-like markings of the former he thought it probable it was the young of the true Salmon, whilst the more spotted markings of the latter might favour the belief that it was the young of the *Salmo trutta*. In each case the young fish, after its accidental capture, was immediately returned to its home.

A vote of thanks, supported by the Chairman, was accorded to the Bishop of Tasmania. A similar vote to Mr. F. M. Bailey, and to the donors of presentations, closed the proceedings.